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Alabama leaders consider prison construction and renovations

by Lauren Walsh
Thursday, June 10th 2021

AA



This file photo shows inside an Alabama prison for men (abc3340.com)

Governor Kay Ivey and legislative leaders are looking for new solutions to address Alabama's prison problems, after a plan to lease three new prisons from private companies fell apart week.



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In a statement, Ivey said no decision was made



"This was simply an opportunity for an update on where we are and what needs to happen, going forward with respect to improving our prison infrastructure," she said.

Senate General Fund Budget Chairman Greg Albritton said many options were discussed, from new construction to renovating existing facilities.

He said Alabama hasn't built a new prison in 20 years, but it's closed two. He says more space is needed.

"We have limited facilities, all in poor condition," Albritton said. "We have 3,000 housed in the county jails, that's more expensive for the state and we have to find a place to put these convicted felons- that's who's in prison- and keep them there as long as their sentences will allow."

TED: Gov. Ivey no longer pursuing prison lease plan, works toward new solution



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The conversation is unfolding with federal eyes on the state. The Justice Department sued



Recent proposals were to build three new large men's prisons.

Albritton estimates each would cost around \$500 million, which includes mental health and medical facilities.

Alabama leaders consider prison construction and renovations (abc3340.com)

"We may not be talking about two or three constructions," he said. "We're going to be looking at all the available resources we have, meaning the existing facilities. I think renovations will be looked at."

Funding options include general fund money, bonds or money from the American Rescue Plan.

"The state received, I think it was \$1.06 B this week and most of us feel that we can use a portion of that money at least for the renovations, maybe for construction," Albritton said. "We'll have to get further guidance on that."

Of all the options discussed, what seemed to be the most favorable option in the meeting?" ABC 33/40 asked.

"I don't know that there was one," he replied. "I can't tell you that there was a general consensus on that. The consensus was that we need to look at all these things."

"We agreed there needs to be many conversations held over the coming weeks which would include more legislators and stakeholders," Ivey said in her statement. "More than anything, though, there was a strong consensus that we must find a solution to this long-neglected challenge that has plagued our state for so long."

The Department of Corrections has not replied to our request for an interview with DOC Commissioner Dunn. We also emailed a list of questions Thursday for this story, which went unanswered.